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RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 5363  
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RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 2756  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 3518  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4690  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5228  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 9826  
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
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SUBJECT: SOCCER IN THE ANDES

REF: LA PAZ 1739

11. SUMMARY: FIFA's (the International Soccer Federation's) May 27 ban on international matches above 2,500 meters has provoked a sharp backlash in Bolivia. President Evo Morales has initiated an international campaign to overturn the decision, asking governments to contact their soccer federations to seek support for suspending the ban pending a medical study on the effects of altitude (reftel: A). On June 26, embassy La Paz received a diplomatic note and a letter from President Morales addressed to President Bush reiterating these requests. Post has informally translated the letter, which we forward to you for your consideration below: END SUMMARY.

12. (COMPLIMENTARY OPENING):

The campaign initiated by Bolivia against FIFA's decision which affects every Andean country - and threatens to divide South American soccer - is sustained by the peoples' right to play sports where they are born and live, without suffering discrimination or exclusion on account of their geographic conditions, ethnicity, culture, economic status, or any other natural trait.

In that sentiment, we believe that soccer cannot lose its universal spirit and should maintain its values of brotherhood, solidarity, and friendship between peoples as a sport without borders or altitude limits. Above all, we are convinced that the social value of soccer as a motor of integration in Latin American and the World should prevail.

In the virtue of these arguments, I would like to emphasize the demand for which Bolivia has become the standard-bearer, pronounced on June 14, in front of the Confederacin Sudamericana de Ftbol (CONMEBOL). With the cohesion of the Andean countries to unify the voice of all South America - together and unanimously ) we are soliciting the suspension of FIFA's executive committee ban at its next meeting in Zurich on the 27th of June.

With these antecedents and applying the spirit of brotherhood that should guide the relations between peoples, countries, and continents, permit me to respectfully solicit your backing and solidarity with this just cause that has been

pronounced in one voice of all of South America. To have this voice listened to and to stop these recurring threats to the practice of soccer at altitude, we must strengthen the solidarity and cohesion of the representatives of the associations and confederations of profession soccer and especially the members of FIFA's executive committee.

From the Andes and Latin America, we recognize, applaud, and enjoy the diversity of the sport and invite the peoples of the world to join us so that no one is prohibited from continuing to play soccer in the mountains, by the sea, in the tropics, on plains, or anywhere else the people want.

(COMPLIMENTARY CLOSING)

GOLDBERG